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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

Route rage

Cyclists using the Greater Niagara Circle Route are citing problems with directional signage, that used by locals and tourists alike. Page 3

Brink to rink

Niagara IceDogs coach Marty Williamson is back at the helm of the hockey club after he was benched last season with a heart problem. Page 8

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Lakeshore expansion nearly complete



GREG FURRINGHER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Glenn Gifford, principal at Lakeshore High School, stands inside the new "crush" area in the Port Colborne school for which a \$5.5-million expansion is nearly complete. The common area is outside the auditorium, being renamed the Lakeshore Catholic High School Performing Arts Centre. See story on Page 2.

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UPFRONT

■ **EDUCATION:** \$5.5-million expansion of Catholic high school in Port Colborne nearing completion

Big changes for Lakeshore students

GREG FURMINGER
Postmedia Network

Final coats of paint were being rolled onto walls, fresh concrete sidewalks blown clean and earth prepared for landscaping at Lakeshore High School last week.

When students arrived for the start of a new academic year Tuesday, a lengthy project to upgrade and expand the school was coming to an end.

"I think when the kids see their new digs they're going to be excited," principal Glenn Gifford said.

"We're all under one roof, which is fantastic."

It was in early 2013 that Niagara Catholic District School Board celebrated the Ministry of Education's \$5.5-million construction announcement, for which work started more than a year ago.

Designed by Raimondo + Associates Architects Inc., the addition was constructed to Manorec Group Inc.

It includes 10 new classrooms — which means all 10 portable buildings at the rear of the school will be removed.

Gone, too, will be "all the headaches that come if you were living in your shed," quipped Gifford, noting that outdoor classrooms are notorious for wasps nests, mould risks and icy outdoor treks in winter months.

The new classrooms — with at least one wall painted the school colour green and with automatic lighting — will be home to ninth-grade classes.

The new lockers will also be used by the freshmen students for their duration at the school, as students at Lakeshore retain the same locker for their entire high school career.

Nearby is a "Gator wellness centre" that will serve as a place to visit the school nurse or chaplain.

The expansion project also includes science lab and student services renovations and much-needed upgrades to its parking lot.

Of particular note for people not under the spell of the



GREG FURMINGER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Glenn Gifford, principal at Lakeshore High School, stands outside the Port Colborne school for which a \$5.5-million expansion is nearly complete. Students should notice a big difference when they return to the hallways.

school bell, a "crush" area, or a common area, with comfortable leather chairs, a high ceiling and a cross-shaped window now forms a lobby area for the school auditorium used often for theatre productions and other performances, including as home for Port Colborne Operatic Society stage plays.

The auditorium will be renamed Lakeshore Catholic High School Performing Arts Centre.

"Our performing arts centre will be a focal point for both our students and the Port Colborne community," Gifford says proudly.

A student naming contest for the space is expected.

The common area during school hours will be a place for students to associate, and falls in with Lakeshore's philosophy of creating a "culture of respect" in which students are treated as young adults.

Similarly, the school's main

entrance renovated a number of years ago is a place where students can congregate on benches or cozy up to a bar and do last-minute homework while watching TSN highlights of the previous night's ball games on a big flat-screen TV.

Gifford, who has taken a very active social media role, including to be featured in videos regularly posted to the school life website Lakeshore Catholic.ca/gators, suggested

the school is not just a place to learn algebra and history, but serves as a community for its 1,026 students who attend from Fort Erie to Dunnville along the Lake Erie shoreline.

That community is also closely connected via Twitter. "If we're going to have an out-of-uniform day, I no longer need to say it on the morning announcements — I just tweet it out to their phones," said Gifford.

How things have changed since Lakeshore opened its doors back in September 1989, when it took occupancy of what had been Lockview Park Secondary School.

When the school first opened the national anthem, prayer and morning announcements required all students meet in the auditorium for lack of a working PA system.

greg.furminger@sunmedia.ca

TOURISM

Circle route signage raises cyclists' ire

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Cyclists using the Greater Niagara Circle Route say finding and inadequate signs are putting the route on a key tourism draw.

"Enough money hasn't been spent on improving the Circle Route," said Rita Dillon, president of the Niagara Freewheelers Bicycle Touring Club.

"If you cycle the route, you would have great difficulty getting from one end to the other," she said. "Over the years the signs have become so faded they are no longer visible."

Dillon and other club members specifically point to poor signage along the corridor as a major issue.

Often, when a trail ends at a road, there is nothing to indicate where it continues, she said. Nor, is there any indication which community the rider is passing through, or where they might find food and accommodation.

The location of the Port Robinson ferry location — as one example — can be a mystery for cyclists, she said.

Dillon said the Freewheelers have been redoubling efforts since 2011 to bring attention to the problems, with limited success.

Freewheelers made a presentation to the Greater Niagara Circle Route Committee, rode the route with members of the engineering departments of St. Catharines, Thorold and Welland, and sent a report to Regional Council.

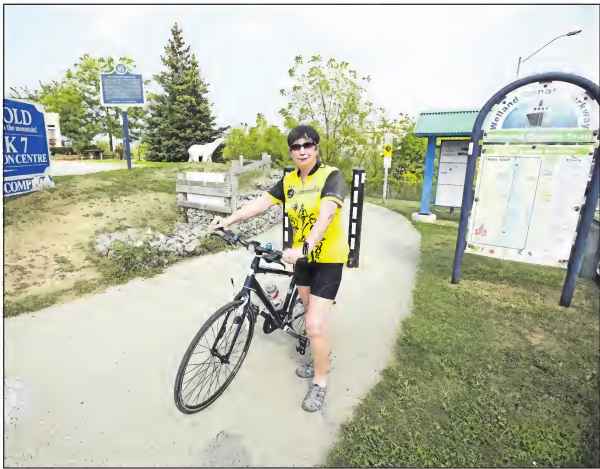
Other concerns addressed to the Region in writing include excessive barriers along the route, and proper maintenance.

The Greater Niagara Circle Route trails system, created by Niagara Region, consists of 140-km of mostly off-road, paved trails for walking, cycling or rollerblading.

It follows the Welland Canal from St. Catharines to Port Colborne, an old CN rail line to Port Erie, the Niagara Parkway on the Lake and Lakeshore Road back to St. Catharines.

The route has been funded by the region, a number of municipalities and governments, and well as the private sector.

Brian Baty, a Pelham regional councillor and Circle Route committee member,



BOB TYMCZYK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Rita Dillon, president of the Niagara Freewheelers with her bike at Lock Seven in Thorold. The group has been trying to bring attention to the Greater Niagara Circle Route and the poor level of signage.

said Circle Route money isn't as flush as Dillon maintains.

A big problem is varying sign standards amongst municipalities where the route goes through, Baty said.

"It does not make sense, where cycling is one of the Region's prime tourist attractions, to have 12 different municipalities all doing different signage," he said.

"We're seeing a bit of a breakthrough," Baty said, adding that the Circle Route is allocating \$10,000 worth of additional signage this year. The Welland Lakes Recreation Parkway is also improving signage.

Earlier this year, a meeting involving route stakeholders, was also held regarding sign-

age and route way-finding. "The topic was looking at sign (customization)," he said.

"It is a work in progress, but we need to get an agreement on a sign template ... we're far closer today than we were six months ago."

Baty said Niagara Region's public works is also entering into a transportation master plan study, with way-finding and signage on that agenda.

"With all of these things under way, it will now get the attention it truly deserves," he said.

Meanwhile, Dillon also pointed to positive work being done by Venture Niagara on the route's behalf.

Susan Morin, community economic development

manager for economic stimulating agency Venture Niagara, said in January Venture launched a Niagara Cycling Tourism Centre in Thorold.

It has a corresponding website www.niagaracyclingtourism.com.

"Yes (guests) are getting lost, they're getting lost in different areas between Welland and Port Colborne," she said, adding the centre website can also be used as a resource, and the circle route has also an online map.

There are also areas "cautioned" in difficult-to-cycle road areas between Niagara-on-the-Lake and St. Catharines.

She said last March, Niagara Region hosted an active

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- Port George
- Vineyard, wineries and orchards
- South Niagara Rowing Club
- St. Catharines Museum/Lock 3 observation area
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transportation summit, which had signage in general as a top priority.

"We know there are gaps along the route," she said.

"And signs are the biggest gap."

don.fraser@postmedia.ca
Twitter @don_standard

I'VE BEEN THINKING

Channelling grief and outrage over refugee crises

REV. THOMAS P. RATH
 First Evangelical Lutheran Church

I am the son of refugees. My parents were born in Yugoslavia, a nation that no longer exists today.

During the Second World War, when they were both young teens, they had to flee rather suddenly and brutally from their homeland because they lived in ethnic German communities and were of German ancestry. As Marshall Tito and his partisan forces advanced Germans were rounded up and put into concentration camps where hundreds of thousands died, including some of their relatives.

My mother's family ended up in western Austria where the family of six lived in cramped quarters for nine years. After the war ended they emigrated to Canada, to Kitchener, where my grandfather's brother had been living since before the war. He told my grandfather to bring his children to Canada where they would have a much better chance at a bright and hopeful future than they would in Europe.

As my father's family fled Yugoslavia, they eventually ended up in Saxony, part of Germany, but eventually had to flee again as the Russians were advancing and they didn't want to end up in what would become East Germany. They got to Bavaria and after the war his family emigrated to the U.S. and over the years and due to other circumstances eventually ended up in Canada, in Toronto.

I recount this history of my family, a brief snapshot of their experience as refugees (it would take a lot longer to give a proper description of their experiences), because of the refugee crisis that has been unfolding recently in the Middle East, Africa and Europe as many thousands of people seek refuge from war and violence. The situation for these people is truly tragic.

That tragedy was particularly highlighted by the picture that appeared last week of a three-year-old Syrian refugee boy lying face down on a Turkish beach after the boat he was on sank and he, his five-year-old brother and his mother drowned.

Some will say that it's none of our business, or it's not our problem, or we have our own things to deal with on this side of the world, we don't have to get involved in things happening half-way around the world. You can say that. But as Christians that should not and cannot be our attitude. Jesus commanded his followers to love their neighbours. That doesn't just apply to people like us. That doesn't just apply to people in our own communities. That applies to all people everywhere and anywhere.

So what are we supposed to do about this? I found the following suggestions of ways to channel our concern, grief, or outrage.

Sponsor a refugee: There are various church and relief agencies who can provide help in that area. Some are actively engaged in working to bring refugees to Canada. If that's something you'd like to be involved in make some inquiries. It can be a lot of work but it's not hard to get started.

Be politically engaged: This is a crucial issue facing our country and the world and with an election coming up we can ask candidates

what their party intends to do about the refugee issue. There are a lot of issues that don't really come up in a campaign because they're not as popular as talking about the economy or how much we have to pay in taxes. We tend to want to know "What are you going to do for me?" rather than "What are you going to do to make the world a better place?"

Give: Church and other relief agencies work with refugees in many places around the world. Many have been working to support Syrian refugees from the earliest days of the brutal civil war there.

Pray: This should probably be number one. Pray for the safety and preservation of all refugees, for wise and compassionate decision makers in the countries in which they're seeking protection, and for peace and justice in the lands they're fleeing. We can do a little or we can do a lot but we ought to do something. These are children of God. We shouldn't be seeing more pictures of them washed up on a beach somewhere.

Ship flew many flags

SKIP GILLHAM
 For Postmedia Network

Doroty Seconda was a refrigerated cargo carrier and often handled frozen fish. It was built at Viareggio, Italy, in 1968 and the 82.8-metre-long vessel sailed for Oceanfrigo under the flag of Italy.

The vessel made a rare Great Lakes visit in 1970 but spent the rest of its career in ocean trading. It became *Ice Star* under the flag of Denmark in 1976 and *Prio Kynos*, Cypriot registry, in 1979. It did not last the year.

The vessel was anchored off the very busy port of Lagos, Nigeria, when it was hit by the motor vessel *Armada*. The vessel was badly damaged and sank but the crew was rescued. *Armada* was a British vessel that never made it to the Great Lakes and it was scrapped in China with fire damage as *Teti* in 1990.



In the Iroquois Lock.

DON BLAUPRE / SPECIAL TO THE POSTMEDIA

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■ MUSIC

Rock for Dimes rolling into Sherkston Shores

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

The weekend warriors return to Sherkston Shores this Friday.

The fifth annual Rock for Dimes fundraiser will gather part-time rockers and aspiring crooners alike for a musical getaway from their day jobs. Held at the Live Lounge on Empire Road, the jam session will feature five bands, one solo artist and benefits March of Dimes Canada programs and services for people with disabilities.

"It's men and women who used to play guitar when they were younger," says organizer Dennis Ullman of Bowman-

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Rock for Dimes Sherkston Shores
WHERE: 190 Empire Rd., Sherkston
WHEN: Sept. 11, 7 p.m.
ADMISSION: \$15

ville. "They put their guitars in the case, went off to school and got married and had kids. Once their careers were established, they trade their briefcases in for their guitar cases."

The event used to be a corporate battle of the bands,

says Ullman, but it will be a straight-forward concert this year.

On the bill will be Neptune Manor, Jeff Poolton, The Wilbur James Blues Band, The Michael Moses Band, The Moonlighters and The Julian Paul Band.

Rock for Dimes is held in several communities across Canada each year, raising more than \$1.2 million. Proceeds from the Sherkston Shores show benefits the March of Dimes' Campers Helping Campers program.

Since it began, the local show has raised nearly \$13,000. The target this year is \$5,000.

"To be a full-time musi-

cian is a real challenge in this day and age," says Ullman, who drums for a band called Eastview. "It's a lot of fun, the bands are very supportive of each other."

He organizes many Rock for Dimes shows.

"My experience across Canada is that Niagara has a very unique music industry. There's all kinds of bands, and you don't see that in other areas."

"In Niagara, there's all kinds of bands out there interested in doing whatever they can."

John.Law@sunmedia.ca



The Wilbur James Blues Band of Niagara Falls is part of the lineup for the 5th annual Rock for Dimes benefit show at Sherkston Shores.

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■ **CANADA 150:** New coin concepts include a local contender

Niagara man's design right on the money

KARENA WALTER
Postmedia Network

As a new coin collector, Wesley Klassen enjoys keeping an eye out different types and trying to find them in his pocket change.

The idea that one of those Royal Canadian Mint coins may bear a design of his own in the future is amazing.

"To get this far, I feel like a winner already," said Klassen, who was announced as a finalist Tuesday in the Royal Canadian Mint's My Canada, My Inspiration coin design contest.

The 49-year-old St. Catharines man's design featuring iconic images from across the country is one of 25 chosen from more than 10,000 entries.

He found out in early August he was a finalist, but had to keep it secret until Tuesday.

"I have not been able to share this until today and it has been agonizing keeping it to myself, but for good reason," he laughed.

"Today, it's been an emotional roller coaster with it going public on the Internet. It's just amazing."

Klassen, an electrician with Ontario Power Generation, has no formal art training but enjoys painting, sketching and photography as a hobby. He credits his parents with instilling the gift of creativity in their children — his father, John Klassen, designed the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake crest in 1971 with no formal training either.

About a year ago, Klassen said a friend got him interested in coin collecting and he learned about the mint's contest from an e-mail.

The idea for his coin featuring Canada's achievements started with Sir John A. Macdonald's 200th birthday anniversary this year and his promise to connect Canada from coast to coast to coast. Klassen based the sketch around the train idea but wanted to tie it together so it represented as much of Canada as possible. Starting from east to west, he

added fishing boats, a lighthouse and Peggy's Cove, Chateau Frontenac, the CN Tower, Prairie grain elevators and Lions' Gate Bridge in B.C.

"The Canadian mint is probably one of the leaders in the world in making coins. It's phenomenal the detail that they can put on a coin, regardless of how small it is," he said. "I realized I had the ability to put a lot of detail into the coin."

The contest was launched in April to celebrate Canada's upcoming 150th anniversary. Canadians were invited to submit designs in five categories celebrating the country's wonders, character, achievements, passions and future.

The mint narrowed down the entries to five finalists in each category. Among the judge judges were astronaut Chris Hadfield, Paralympian and advocate Rick Hansen, former Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson and Free the Children co-founders Craig and Marc Kielburger.

Klassen's Coast to Coast design is up against submis-

sions in the achievements category by residents from Ottawa, Halifax, N.S., Buchanan, Sask., and Delta, B.C. — the latter design is also called Coast to Coast.

The winning designs will be featured on five-, 10- and 25-cent coins and the one and two dollar coins. They'll be circulated in 2017.

The public can vote for their favourite design in each category until Oct. 9 at www.mint.ca/Canada150.

Christine Aquino, director of communications and public affairs at the Royal Canadian Mint, said it's rare the mint invites the public to submit designs.

It receives hundreds of coin suggestions a year from people, so it decided to invite Canadians to design coins for Canada's 150.

"There's quite a wide array of designs to choose from so we were absolutely thrilled with the response we received," she said.

The five winners will receive \$2,000 each and a trip to Ottawa for the unveiling of their coins.

"To have the opportunity to design a circulation coin



ROB TYMCZYSZYN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Wesley Klassen has made the finalists in the Royal Canadian Mint coin design contest. He hopes people will vote for his sketch in the "our Achievements" category.

comes along once in a generation," she said.

Klassen said it would be an honour to be chosen and have his design become part of Canadian history.

He encouraged people to go online and vote.

"I'd be happy if it was for me but I still encourage everybody to go online and vote

for whoever their favourites are," he said.

It's something he did on Tuesday in all the categories.

"I am very impressed," he said. "There are some absolutely wonderful, creative, artistic designs."

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■ BOOKS

Mom's wisdom provides fodder for first book

SARAH FERGUSON
Postmedia Network

What was meant to be a birthday gift for her daughter became Jennifer McKenzie-Pellegrini's first book.

Something You Should Know: A Gen X Mother's Guide to Life for Gen Y and Z Daughters offers youths advice about life in a "fun and witty way," says McKenzie-Pellegrini.

"I didn't really set out to write a book," says the Fort Erie resident and former journalist who has worked at publications including *The Fort Erie Times* and *The Standard*.

McKenzie-Pellegrini's daughter, Madeleine, was about to turn 15.

"We didn't really have a birthday present for her. I thought 'I've got nothing for her to open.' All these thoughts started coming into my head."

After McKenzie-Pellegrini made dinner for her family and cleaned the kitchen, she set to work writing down some of her thoughts about life.

"I sat down at the kitchen table and I started typing," she says.

Although McKenzie-Pellegrini's thoughts were written on plain paper, her daughter enjoyed every word.

"She read it and said it was really good. I told her it was for her and she said 'Yeah, but it's really good, Mom. You should do something with it.'"

Having grown up in the 1980s, McKenzie-Pellegrini's world view was shaped by a variety of events including Live Aid, tearing down the Berlin Wall and the *Challenger* space shuttle explosion. McKenzie-

Pellegrini says it made sense to name the book *Something You Should Know: A Gen X Mother's Guide to Life for Gen Y and Z Daughters* because it represents a mother passing her advice and wisdom to her daughter, who is part of the next generation of women.

McKenzie-Pellegrini also named the chapters after some of the music she listened to as a teen.

"The first chapter is Don't Stop Believing by Journey. Then there's Modern Love by David Bowie and Under Pressure by Queen and David Bowie."

McKenzie-Pellegrini offers a wide variety of advice, which includes purchasing "red lipstick and a nice pair of shoes to make you feel good about yourself."

McKenzie-Pellegrini says her book talks about "the importance of making a good choice for yourself when it comes time to have sex."

"I want my daughter to do what's right for her and to make the best possible decision."

Other advice McKenzie-Pellegrini offers includes hand-writing thank-you cards and Christmas cards, to be charming, to be witty and to "use sarcasm sparingly." "to play classic music really loud when you're home alone" and "if you have no one in your life to buy you flowers, then buy your own."

"The book talks about all the things my mom taught me, the stuff I wish she'd have taught me and other things I learned the hard way," McKenzie-Pellegrini says.

"When I was writing this book, I wanted it to be a little bit funny."



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■ **HOCKEY:** IceDogs coach Marty Williamson back behind the bench after heart attack last spring

From the brink to the rink

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

It didn't feel like it at the time, passed out in the shower, but Marty Williamson knows it was the best thing that could have happened to him.

Otherwise, he might not be here, discussing another season behind the bench for the Niagara IceDogs. Discussing anything, really.

It was last March, as the team was heading to Erie for a late season game. It was Williamson's sixth season as coach, and one of his toughest. The IceDogs got off to a miserable start, but surged in the second half to make a play-off push. Williamson hopped in the shower feeling dizzy, but brushed it off. Then he blacked out. He woke up a short time later, disoriented with a small cut on his head.

"I phoned my wife and said, 'I just kinda passed out,' he

recalls. "I didn't know if I was just not feeling well, so I came to the rink."

That's when he knew something was up. Everyone was telling him he didn't look so good. He was told to go to the team doctor, who informed him his heart rate was at 170.

Off to the hospital he went, where doctors gave him something to steady his heart. But during a followup visit, he got the feeling something was wrong. Sure enough, they informed him he had something called a bicuspid aortic valve, in which one of the valves connecting the heart and the aorta is faulty. It occurs in about four per cent of the male population.

The news didn't get better: The resulting aneurysm of his aorta was already in the danger zone.

"Fairly normal is about two to two-and-a-half centimetres, and I was into the seven to

eight centimetres (range)," he says. "Which is a big concern. (The doctor) said I can't have any excitement and I must rest, rest, rest."

The problem? The IceDogs were in the second round of the playoffs, trailing the Oshawa Generals two games to none. Game 3 was a must-win at home.

"I said, 'I'll just stay calm on the bench, I won't get too excited about anything.' But my wife had called (IceDogs co-owner) Bill Burke, and told him what the deal was here. Bill met me at the front door and said, 'You're not coaching this evening.'"

Burke, who purchased the former Mississauga IceDogs franchise in 2007 with his wife, Denise, has long touted his OHL team as a family. Which includes the coach. As hard as it was — in the middle of an unexpected play-off run — he wasn't letting Williamson near

the ice.

"The doctor said he can't be on the bench, so I cut him off," recalls Burke. "It was an emotional time for both of us for sure, because he's such a competitor."

"He said, 'I'm OK, I just won't yell at the refs.' He was going to watch the game from the coach's office, then decided it would be too stressful so he went home."

Williamson recalls the frustration of that night. He wasn't in pain. He was ready to go. His team needed him.

"I was still in disbelief," he says. "I didn't think it was as serious as it was. You don't feel any symptoms. It's not like I've got chest pain. I wasn't passing out any more. It's not a heart attack. It's the aorta valve that goes to your brain, and it's expanding. If it bursts, you have very little chance of living."

The IceDogs won Game



JULIE JOCSAK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Marty Williamson, general manager and head coach of the Niagara IceDogs, is back on the ice starting Tuesday after his 2014-15 season was cut short by a heart problem. He is photographed during the first day of the Niagara IceDogs training camp at the Meridian Centre in St. Catharines.

3-7-3, but lost the series in five games. It stung then, but Burke is relieved now it ended so early.

"If we weren't going to win it all I'm glad we lost then, so (Marty) could just get better."

With the team eliminated from the playoffs, William-

son had plenty to think about heading into his open heart surgery on May 13. He was 52, spending most of his life in hockey's extreme highs and lows. He had just gone through an incredibly stressful season.

See COACH Page 9



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■ COACH

Medication helps steady racing heart

From Page A8

And it took passing out in the shower to possibly save his life.

"This is kind of the thing that happens to people in their mid-30s when they just drop," he says. "I'm very fortunate. This thing has been building and they found it. The racing heart is not a symptom of the aneurysm — they're two separate things — but if I hadn't passed out that day, they would have never found the aneurysm."

"It was the luckiest thing that happened to me."

Williamson thought the worst was over. And by worst, he means having his chest cut open for seven hours of surgery. Once inside, doctors realized the aneurysm was bigger than anticipated.

"They basically did a graft from my heart all the way from

my heart to the top of my neck," he says. "The aorta artery is all brand new now."

But then his original problem returned — the racing heart. As he was trying to recover from major surgery, Williamson's ticker caused six trips to the emergency room.

"I was exhausted. It was like running two marathons. I was just so tired, and I was telling them, 'Get this thing to stop.'"

"That's when it got a little bit serious," he recalls. "I've got this broken chest so I can barely move, everything's painful, and now I can't get my heart to stop racing."

Doctors were stymied until they finally found the medication to steady his heart. Williamson took it all summer, quitting just before last Tuesday's start of the IceDogs' training camp at

Meridian Centre.

He's beaming as he walks the hallway leading to the rink. The parents of a recently drafted player stop him, telling him he looks great. Slimmer. One of the benefits of his ordeal is that Williamson has lost nearly 30 pounds.

He feels better. He's certainly thrilled with this year's IceDogs. But there's more appreciation for his life outside of hockey as well. It's only now he realizes

what his wife Deb went through last spring, as he was wrapped up in the playoffs.

He wanted to coach. She wanted her husband to come home.

"You could see the stress on my wife, and my kids," he says. "My wife thought I was crazy, and to her credit she phoned Bill. I was in the double stage, and she knew how serious this thing was. I appreciate everything she did."

"And Bill and Denise were just phenomenal. How supportive they were to my wife and family ... I'll always be grateful."

For his part, Burke is happy to have his coach back. And his friend.

"We went out the other day for lunch and he had a salad," he says. "Not that he was ever a

bad eater, but he says he knows he has to be a little more careful. I know he'll do a great job."

"It was a heck of a summer for him, and a heck of a score for all of us. It was hard to keep your focus."

john.lau@esmedia.ca



JULIE ARCIA/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Marty Williamson, head coach and general manager for the Niagara IceDogs, is back on the ice after his 2014-15 season was cut short by a heart problem.

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■ RESEARCH

Study weighs the causes of the 'Freshman 15'

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

First-year Brock University students are needed to participate in a research study about the dreaded 'Freshman 15'.

This term is used to describe the effects first year can have on a student. Researchers from Brock's kinesiology department are studying what the transition from high school to university does to a person.

"People are aware of the fact that first year is challenging, and the students are getting younger," said kinesiology assistant professor and research lead Andrea Josse.

"The pressures and issues that they face coming into university are real and they are of concern. We want to make sure our students have the best possible experience. Not just in first year, but that they are equipped with information and tools that they need to succeed. Not just academically, but emotionally and socially."

Josse said they would like to have as many students participate as possible.

Students who participate must be between 17 and 20. They will be assessed in September and then again in March, before exams. Josse said they will be asked nutrition information and take saliva samples, along with other information to understand the changes that occur.

Second-year master of kinesiology students Aaysha Thomas, 23, and Kayleigh Beaudry, 22, are conducting research with Josse's supervision for their theses.

Thomas's research will focus on physical activity, while Beaudry's research will focus on nutrition. They hope to have more participants this year so they can complete the study. Last year they only had about 65

participants complete the study.

"We started last year with our first round of participants and we are just hoping to get more participants to be signed up to complete the study this year. The more students we have the more accurate our data will be," said Thomas.

Beaudry said the importance of doing a study like this is that since this is the start of adulthood it sets your habits for the rest of your life.

"Starting out of university and becoming your own adult and becoming very independent is very indicative of the lifestyle habits you are going to have through the rest of your life," said Beaudry.

The study, which will be published in an academic journal, won't be completed until fall next year.

The researchers weren't able to comment on their findings yet, but Beaudry did say the information they have gathered so far is interesting.

Thomas is hoping that with the data they gather "we can get some programs into place to help people. Kind of deal with eating on campus, or if they are not sure how to work out, help them with that. Ease them with the transition a bit."

Both students said they weren't immune to the Freshman 15 either. Beaudry said she was 100 per cent affected due to not having any structure.

"You can do whatever you want, eat whatever you want."

Thomas said even though she was involved in sports, including rowing, she was also affected by the stresses of first year.

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Arts school ready to step into spotlight

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

A \$46-million arts school is drawing its curtains to hundreds of students, on time and on budget.

On Tuesday, Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts kicked off its first academic year, with classes at the Carlisle and St. Paul streets facility starting the next day.

"We're imagining 450-500 students coming in, using the building," said Derek Knight, the school's director. "There will be wonderful energy that these 18- to 21-year-olds generate... as they harness their creative activities."

A flurry of work has gone on behind the scenes this summer to make it all happen. A move-in to the school actually started on June 23.

"It was a really interesting strategic planning effort," Knight said. "Imagine the prospect of moving tons of equipment, let alone the things typical in a theatre arts or music program."

"It ranges from lighting to pianos and things like that. And putting all that stuff where it might belong."

The downtown site will be a new home for the university's departments of dramatic arts, music, and visual arts, and the centre for studies in arts and culture. It includes 50 full-time faculty members, part-time instructors and staff and up to 400 students.

Facilities include art studios, a framing shop and art stores, digital classrooms, music practice rooms, a stand-alone 235-seat theatre, wardrobe, design and scene shop, rehearsal rooms, learning commons and a student gallery.

Meanwhile, the \$60-million FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre next door is set to open its 98,000-square foot complex this fall. The venues at the City of St. Catharines facility include Partridge Hall, Cairns Recital Hall, Robertson Theatre and the Film Theatre.

Students from the school will make use of two performance venues as learning environments — Cairns Recital Hall and the Film Theatre.

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THEATRE

Mamet brings spark to Firehall

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Is the Firehall Theatre ready for David Mamet?

The button-pushing, fiery playwright is hardly who you'd expect at the corner of Kitchener and Walnut streets in Niagara Falls, but a group of Firehall regulars have decided the time is right. *Oleanna*, Mamet's abrasive drama about a power struggle between a professor and female student, opens Sept. 11 for five performances.

"This show really is quite edgy," says director Laurel Candier. "This is probably a show that most community theatres would hesitate to do."

Including the Niagara Falls Music Theatre Society, which is usually gearing up for its season at the Fire-

hall Theatre this time of year. But with the season opener not starting until October, some longtime members of the company saw a chance to try something different. Candier, along with producer Paul Lewis and stage manager Michelle Longhurst, formed the aptly named 1-Off Productions to test the waters of darker fare at the Firehall.

They all were fond of Mamet's 1992 play, an intense show known to divide audiences and spark arguments during intermission. Longtime Firehall cast members Glen McCann and Dayna Harold were then cast, and word began to spread.

"We were looking to make use of the space at a time when the theatre is sitting empty," says Candier. "Will we be just one-off? We'll see."

Lewis is confident Niagara audi-

ences are ready for more diverse theatre.

"You can see that happening on television — they can be a lot harder on their audiences," he says. "This gave (the performers) an opportunity to do interesting stuff. I mean, you can't just do *Oleanna* and *Carousel* year after year."

"Personally, I'm disappointed when I go the theatre and people say, 'Oh it's just fun,'" adds Candier. "I wish to be challenged. I can't be alone in that."

The show will be the first production at Firehall Theatre in at least 25 years to have a liquor licence, says Lewis. It's all designed to build buzz for the theatre and bring it back to the days when the program was 30 pages.

"We want to maximize what we've



LAUREL CANDIER, DIRECTOR OF *Oleanna*, a 1-Off Production play opening Friday at the Firehall Theatre in Niagara Falls.

got here," says Candier. "The space, the time, the opportunity to do works that other community groups may not."

The Niagara Falls Music theatre Society season opens with *Rent* Oct. 30, followed by the farce *Leah Me a Tender* Feb. 19 and musical *She Loves Me* April 29.

john.law@sunmedia.ca

IF YOU GO:

WHAT: *Oleanna*, by David Mamet
WHERE: Firehall Theatre, 4990 Walnut St., Niagara Falls
WHEN: Sept. 11, 12, 18, 19, 20
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■ ONLINE MUSIC

Musical globe-trotting with Michael Saracino

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Michael Saracino is on a worldwide musical mission.

The Niagara Falls singer/producer isn't content to just travel. He wants the artists he meets to feel linked somehow, creating unified music they share even if they've never met. And so on an observation tower overlooking the falls, The Globe Series was born last year.

Saracino's plan was to have musicians from around the world performing in front of landmarks, collaborating on music despite being separated by thousands of miles. For his first segment, he was joined by Samantha Hooey, who over-dubbed her vocals in Vancouver. She then recorded one of her

own songs, which another artist in another country contributes to.

The cycle can seemingly continue forever. Or until Saracino's passport expires.

He has so far uploaded three episodes onto YouTube, with two more on the way. In total, Saracino has visited 10 countries on three continents.

"What I'm trying to do with The Globe Series is to have a perpetual thing," he says. "I would love to do one that connects every province and territory across Canada, I'd love to do one that connects blues artists across North America."

"The real aim is to create a community among musicians who have never met."

The three webisodes focus on Niagara Falls, Vancouver and Aus-

tralia. Still to come is New Zealand, England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Germany, with performances that could pass as a postcard (The Eiffel Tower, Sydney Harbour, etc.).

Saracino wants to hit the U.S. next, finding singers in New York, Austin and possibly New Orleans to keep the project going.

The massive undertaking hasn't been an expensive one, surprisingly. Saracino says he's used to traveling on the cheap, often performing to cover costs and "living on noodles." To secure sponsors to help pay for future trips, he put together a trailer of his first few ventures.

"No one's going to believe in just a pipe dream idea from somebody who's never done it before," he says.

"So I said I need to do something, to have something, to show people if I want to perpetuate the idea."

Finding singers to participate has been the easiest part. In Sydney, Saracino once showed up for a gig on the wrong day. The scheduled artist, Jordan Miller, let him trade spots and then participated in The Globe Series when Saracino picked it to him.

"By the time I got to New Zealand I didn't know anybody," he says, "so I went to open mike (shows) and asked them who their favourite songwriters in the area were. I went

through YouTube and Facebook pages. The cool thing is, of everyone I've contacted, no one has ever said no."

The aim is to show the connecting power of music.

"My hope is basically to create collaborations that wouldn't have happened otherwise," he says. "I've always produced music, so the idea of almost having a worldwide way to make productions between people is cool."

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SUPPLIED PHOTO

Niagara Falls musician Michael Saracino is linking artists from around the world with his webisodes called The Globe Series.



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■ **MUSIC:** Tim Hicks bringing his Get a Little Crazy Tour to Niagara

Singer 'can't wait to bring this train home'

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

It'll be another homecoming at the Scotiabank Convention Centre.

St. Catharines country star Tim Hicks will play the Niagara Falls venue Nov. 27 as part of his Get a Little Crazy Tour. The headlining tour sees Hicks cross the country for 14 dates, starting Nov. 1 in Sault Ste. Marie.

Fan pre-sales for all shows starts at 10 a.m. Sept. 8. General public sale starts at 10 a.m. Sept. 11.

It marks the largest show Hicks has played in Niagara, and for good reason: He has never been bigger. His sophomore release, *50/1*, peaked at No. 7 on the Canadian country charts last summer, and gets a special edition re-release Sept. 4 with four new tracks.

He's up for three awards, including Album of the Year, at the Sept. 13 Canadian Country Music Association Awards. He'll perform live at the show in Halifax.

When reached Monday, Hicks said he was anxious to head home.

"I can't wait to bring this train home to Niagara," he said. "It's been far too long since we've played locally, and I've never been more excited to play my hometown."

"It's gonna be a great night, I can promise you that."

Since winning Male Vocalist of the Year and Country Artist of the Year at the 2011 Niagara Music Awards, Hicks has stormed



AMBER MCCORMICK/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

St. Catharines country star Tim Hicks returns to Niagara to play the Scotiabank Convention Centre Nov. 27.

the Canadian country charts with his like *Get By, Here Comes the Thunder* and the new *Young, Alive and In Love*. He was nominated for Country Album of the Year and Breakthrough Artist of the Year at last year's Juno Awards.

In March, he'll play Australia for the first time with two shows at the CMC Rocks QLD Festival.

Hicks' 2015 tour will also see stops in Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Vancouver, London and Oshawa. Opening for him will be Jason Benoit and Cold Creek Country.

Tickets for all shows will be available at www.GetALittleCrazyTour.com.

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Rezz: Another Falls EDM star on the rise

JOHN LAW
Pestmedia Network

The moment was so surreal, Isabelle Rezzazadeh can barely contain herself re-telling the story.

There she was last week in Montreal, opening up for her musical idol Deadmau5, when someone saddled up beside her on stage. She turned to her right, and there was the Mau5 himself, Joel Zimmerman.

"He comes up to me, while I'm on stage, and literally goes 'You're from Niagara Falls!'" she recalls with a laugh. "As I'm performing we're talking on stage. I was telling him I went to (A&R) Myer and stuff like that. He just seemed genuinely interested... where I'm from and how I'm here.

"He was so nice to me. It really did feel like there was some sort of connection because we're both from 'Niagara Falls'."

After the chat came another surprise: Instead of heading backstage afterwards, Zimmerman pulled up a chair and watched the rest of Rezzazadeh's set. He may have been watching another Niagara electronic dance music (EDM) star in the making.

"I was just thinking, 'Imagine if my room knew that he was watching me right now.' She'd be like having a heart attack."

But Rezzazadeh — who goes by the stage name Rezz — didn't get there by accident. The 20-year-old producer has built considerable buzz in the past year for her thumping, cinematic tracks and infectious energy. The words pour out quickly over the phone as she describes her whirlwind life since graduating high school two years ago.

"I've always been a hard-working person with things that I love," she says. "When I was young, it was sports. Basketball and stuff. I used to excel. But there's a difference between loving something and being passionate about something. "With dance music, creating it, it's very clear in my mind that this is passion. My whole life, I've been looking for something to give all my attention to."

A DJ since she was 16, Rezzazadeh bided her time playing other people's music until a Deadmau5 concert inspired her to create her own. She fired up her Ableton software and was struggling until she watched a Deadmau5 livestream — one of his marathon sessions in which he literally creates a track from start to finish in his studio.

Her mind was blown. She saw just what it took.

"I was so captivated by what he was doing," she says. "I thought, 'If I got the hang of this one day, this could be really fun.'"

"I studied like non-stop. There was a point where I'd stay awake until 8 a.m. every single day just studying production. You Tube videos and stuff, just learning about how to technically do things. I was confident in my ideas, but wasn't fully confident in the production end of it."

As she kept giving form to her musical ideas, an identity and unique sound started peaking through. Through to get her noticed by EDM producer Atlas, who records for Zimmerman's label mau5trap ("I guess he was scrolling through the Internet and found my

music"). He sent some of her tracks to the label manager, who asked to keep her posted for a possible release.

When the label put out her spacey single Serenity in June, she felt like a "legit" artist. Things picked up further when three more songs were released on Skrillex's label OWSLA. The dub-step producer noticed her on a blog he "stumbled upon," and liked what he heard.

"He ended up following me on Twitter," she says. "This is one of the moments where my brain exploded. I look at my phone and it says Skrillex followed you on Twitter. I ran upstairs and my mom says my face went white. As soon as I showed her that, he messaged me immediately after."

The seal of approval from her two biggest influences loaded Rezzazadeh with confidence. Her management, Toronto-based 2+2, got her signed with EDM booking agency AM Only for a series of big shows. On Sept. 27 she plays TomorrowWorld in Atlanta, followed by the Monster Mash in Toronto Oct. 30 and Prime in Boston Dec. 5.

Assorted other gigs are filling up her calendar, to go along with her debut EP *Insurrection*, released July 20.

She's taking a cautious approach to her early success. She still lives at home, with no plans to move out soon. And she's keeping her focus on original music, instead of coasting on familiar tracks. Her career in many ways mirrors the Niagara Falls-bred path of Zimmerman, who is now one of the industry's giants.

"The reason Deadmau5 is as big as he is, is because people connect to his music," she says. "If you want to be super successful and actually have something people really hold onto and connect with, that's when you've got to produce music."

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